

# Hughes nominated to run Voice of America

By George Brandon

John Hughes, President Reagan's nominee to head the Voice of America, expects an emphasis on journalistic "professionalism" will allow him to weather the political storms that brought about his predecessor's resignation.

"I'm going to approach VOA the same as I've approached every news organization I've worked for," vowed Hughes in an interview shortly after his nomination was announced by the White House "and that is very professionally."

Hughes has the credentials to speak with authority on the profession of reporting the news. He cut his journalistic teeth as a cub reporter on a newspaper in South Africa after his family moved there in 1946. He went on to report for the *London Daily Mirror* and *Reuters* before deciding in the mid-50s, at the age of 24, to come to the United States and seek a job at the *Christian Science Monitor* in Boston.

He signed on as a copy boy at the Monitor and within months began editing foreign news. In 1961, he returned to Africa as a Monitor correspondent and later went on to serve six years in Hong Kong as the Monitor's Far East correspondent. During the Hong Kong tour, he won the 1967 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for coverage of the attempted Communist coup in Indonesia, the subsequent purge of Communists and the eventual overthrow of the Sukarno government.

He became managing editor of the Monitor in 1970 and soon was named editor. He served as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1978-79, perhaps the ultimate peer recognition among daily editors. And a year before his tenure as ASNE president began, he and his wife Libby became owners of a weekly newspaper, the *Cape Cod Oracle* in Orleans, Mass.

Since the 1977 purchase of the Orleans weekly, the Hughes' have bought two other weeklies, the *Yarmouth Sun* and the *Cape Cod News* in Hyannis. They also own, in partnership with MPG Communications of Plymouth, Mass., a share of the *Village Broadside* in Sandwich.

Glen Dwinnells, who left the Monitor when Hughes bought the Oracle is general manager of the group of weeklies, with Libby Hughes holding the title "publisher." Dwinnells says the Hughes children continue to be involved in operating the papers during the summer months.

Hughes' nomination to be VOA director followed the resignation of James Conkling, a former West Coast recording industry executive, who cited political pressure from both the right and

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left in announcing his desire to leave government work.

Conkling had drawn criticism from conservatives for not moving fast enough to redirect the Voice's foreign news broadcasts to portray the U.S. government actions more positively. Yet, at the same time, he was criticized for the steps he did take in that direction by members of VOA's professional news staff who feared the Reagan Administration would stress propaganda over news.

Hughes, who has been associate director of programs for the International Communications Agency, VOA's parent organization, was chosen by ICA director Charles Z. Wick to succeed Conkling at VOA.

Hughes acknowledged in an interview with E&P the internal tug-of-war at VOA between a news staff of career reporters and editors and the political appointees charged with changing executive policy to conform with Reagan Administration foreign policy goals.

But he said he would have "absolutely no problems about maintaining its objectivity—fairness may be better. We can tell the facts as accurately, speedily and effectively as we know how." But as news professionals do in every newsroom in the country, he said, VOA reporters and editors will clash at times over the structure of a story or the play it should get. It's all part of a "perfectly proper professional dialogue," he said, "that will take place no matter who runs VOA."

In explaining how he proposes to continue VOA's reputation for accurately reporting the news abroad while promoting the Administration's foreign policy goals, Hughes referred to the VOA character.

The first two sections require the VOA to report the news "accurately and without bias," Hughes said, while depicting "the full spectrum" of American activities.

But the third section of the charter calls for VOA to "articulate the foreign policy of the United States," Hughes said, and that part of VOA's mission should be "clearly designated (during broadcasts to foreign countries) as commentary, as opposed to news."

"The U.S. government happens to own the Voice of America," he said, "and it's not unreasonable" for an administration to discuss its foreign policy "as assertively as possible."

In his position as ICA director of programs during the last year, Hughes said he has been responsible for producing "11 or 12 foreign language magazines

## Gannett to acquire Hederman papers

Gannett Co., Inc. announced an agreement to acquire three daily, two Sunday and six weekly newspapers in Mississippi from the Hederman family.

They include the morning *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, afternoon *Jackson Daily News* and the afternoon *Hattiesburg American*, with the combined daily circulation of 132,000 and a combined Sunday circulation of over 145,000.

These newspapers will be the 86th, 87th, and 88th dailies in the group, and the first in Mississippi, which becomes the 37th state in which Gannett has newspaper or broadcasting operations.

The agreement was announced by Allen H. Neuharth, chairman and president of Gannett and for the Mississippi Publishing Corp. by the Hederman brothers, Robert M. Jr., Tom, Henry, and Zach.

The Hedermans said they decided to sell their newspapers to the Gannett group because "we wanted an organization that will best manage these newspapers in the tradition of quality and community service."

The weekly newspapers included in the acquisition are the *Madison County Herald*, the *Clinton News*, the *Ocean Springs Record*, the *Lumberton Headblock*, the *Gautier Independent*, and the *Pearl Press Chronicle*.

## Allbritton agrees to buy N.Y. News

Joseph Allbritton and the Tribune Co. have reached a tentative agreement on the sale of the *New York News*.

The Tribune Co. received a letter of intent from Allbritton on April 1st.

The sale will include the newspaper, its printing plant in Brooklyn, and its rotogravure plant in Queens.

The sale does not include the News Building on East 42nd St., and the garage on East 41st St. in Manhattan.

According to the agreement, Allbritton and the 11 unions at the News have 30 days to reach terms on new contracts.

around the world," and preparing "about 30,000 words a day", texts of cabinet speeches and administration policy statements—for dissemination to more than 200 U.S. diplomatic posts.

He also oversees film and television operations and said he has been particularly involved in transmitting television signals by satellite. Hughes said he plans to continue managing the television operations, in addition to his VOA duties, if his nomination is approved by the Senate. There appears to be no opposition to his appointment.